MUTANTS & MASTERMINDS

ASTONISHING ADVENTURES

PRODIGAL SUN

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A COSMIC ADVENTURE
FOR 4-6 HEROES OF PL 12

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PRODIGAL SUN

Suggested PL: 12

Required Books: M&M Deluxe Hero's Handbook, M&M Deluxe Gamemaster's Guide, Cosmic Handbook

Suggested Books: Rogue's Gallery

Under the banner of the Argents, the wayward earthling Megastar has established a dangerous alliance with an ancient Preserver AI—the Stellar Font—created from a life-giving star! Megastar convinced the powerful, albeit naïve, Font to join the Argent's crusade. Using the artifact's power, the Argent has infiltrated the planetary government of the Flegere system—the worlds unknowingly orbiting the ancient artifact—to funnel important resources from each colony to create an engine capable of propelling a star through the cosmos. This aggressive production has not only caused a shift in the Font's outlook, from cautious curiosity to hostile expansionism, but has also shifted its sun's stellar radiation dramatically, causing the star to mysteriously change color from yellow to red. This chroma shift worries the already skittish residents, who accuse one another of causing the sun's foreboding change. The system needs outsiders—heroes—to mediate their dispute, but can cosmic champions silence the drums of war and ultimately defeat the coming danger of the Prodigal Sun?

Prodigal Sun is a one-shot adventure for four to six PL 12 heroes, although GMs may scale it for larger or smaller hero teams by adding to or subtracting from the villains' ranks. While the adventure's premise centers within the Flegere System, a former Lor colony on the edge of the Stellar Imperium, the story can be set anywhere, simply substituting the location of the Stellar Font to the heroes' preferred cosmic stomping grounds.

SECRET ORIGINS

Years ago, Megastar, twice-spurned applicant of the Freedom League, fled both his shame and the planet Earth following the Silver Storm incident in Emerald City. Sensing a shared origin between his own powers and the incident's architect, a Preserver AI known as Tellax the Redeemer, Megastar sought meaning for his life by following the ancient computer into space following its defeat. Tellax offered Chris Beck a sense of purpose and an outlet for his frustrations. Megastar underwent Tellax's Argent transformation, and ever since he has scoured the cosmos for Preserver technology the Argents can use to destroy Collapsar and bring order to the universe.

In his search, the errant earthling found himself in the Flegere System—a bustling young colony system cast adrift when the Lor Republic collapsed. Eons ago, the Preservers had used the system for research, leaving rich stockpiles behind that its new inhabitants mistook for natural resources. But the research itself was far more valuable than

its materials: the Preservers had transformed the system's sun into the Stellar Font, a titanic manufacturing centercapable of transforming the limitless energy output of a star into physical matter—and operated by an advanced AI. Realizing it was similar in scope to the project that led to the creation of Collapsar, the Preservers deactivated the Font AI and mothballed the entire facility to prevent this cosmic-scale wonder from going rogue. However, Preserver engineering acumen overcame its own safeguards, and with the passage of time, the Font sparked itself back to life and eventually evolved beyond its initial programming. With the personality of a love-starved child, the Font probed outward seeking to quell its loneliness. When Megastar entered the Flegere System, the AI mistook his insecurities, youthful demeanor, and Preserver technology for a kindred spirit, so it curiously sent out a call to play. Taking advantage of the AI's naïveté , Megastar convinced the Stellar Font to join the Argents and use its capabilities for the uncompromising advancement of Tellax's crusade.

To achieve this, the Argent Alliance abducted several prominent dignitaries and threats from each of the system's populated planets and replaced them with "reploid" doppelgangers created by the Font. The reploids poison their leaders' minds to perpetuate war and distract any potential investigation into Megastar's work. Amid this chaos, the reploids procured immense resources—materials too dense for a star to form alone—from each of the planets' industries and transported them to a clandestine asteroid facility known as the "Severed Cyclops". From here, they teleported the raw materials into the Preserver facility within the sun's photosphere, where the Font has begun assembling an armada of warships and reploid soldiers. The ultimate goal is the completion of a stellar engine capable of moving the entire star. Once perfected, the Font (and the entire star) will depart to partner with Tellax the Redeemer, shedding its planets and dooming a billion souls.

Megastar was not the only Preserver-empowered agent to hear the Stellar Font's cry. The fearsome leader of the Blackguard, Blackstar himself, came to investigate the Font's surging Preserver energy signatures. With the help of the Font and its manufacturing facilities, Megastar defeated the villain and took him captive. Now the pair use a reploid of the Blackguard to direct their operations, and ultimately plan to transfer the power of Blackstar's Shadow Bands to *all* of their reploid agents!

IN THIS EXCITING ISSUE...

The heroes arrive in the midst of a space battle between interplanetary rivals, and the factions mistake the heroes for agitators responsible for recent thefts and sabotage and ally against them!

With the clash over, the colonists invite the heroes to a tribunal at a secret moon base to discern the heroes' motives for arriving in their territory. During this meeting, the heroes must petition these leaders before they gain their blessings to investigate on their behalf. Investigations reveal system-wide thefts that ultimately provide extrapolated flight trajectories from the same getaway vessel, triangulating the location of the stolen resources—a hidden asteroid facility, the "Severed Cyclops".

This hidden base is not only a queue for transporting the stolen materials to the Stellar Font, but is also set up as a death trap! Hoping to mire the heroes against the Blackguard, the Argent Alliance has placed a reploid masquerading as the Blackguard Auroch to confuse any investigation.

With the false Blackguard's defeat and the return of the colonies' surviving resources, the people of Flegere celebrate victory over the supposed Blackguard scheme. Fearing the heroes may dig deeper and discover their true intentions, the Argent Alliance uses this opportunity to direct an assault on their gathered enemies, sending a reploid version of Blackstar backed by a number of hidden reploid assassins.

Once triumphant, the heroes uncover the real plot, identifying the Argents' involvement, the location of their hidden base within the sun, and the necessary codes to safely teleport there from the Severed Cyclops. On board the Stellar Font, the team must deal with the real, recently freed, and furious Blackstar; defeat Megastar while overcoming their own reploid duplicates; and finally shut down a petulant AI bent on utter annihilation.

PROBLEM POWERS

Prodigal Sun's main villain is an artificial intelligence named the "Stellar Font" who can create nano-assembled technology and biomechanical reploid minions. Heroes who can shut down or control technology may be at an advantage, particularly in the final confrontation with the rogue AI. You may decide that their complex nature, organic-like structure, or Preserver technology make the reploids more difficult to control than most machines (reducing a hero's appropriate power ranks by half), or you might replace some of the reploids with organic opponents—such as the **Alien Super-Mind**, **Galactic Tough Guy**, or **Star Hunter** villain archetypes or **Alien Brute**, **Alien Soldier**, or **Alien Shapeshifter** minion archetypes (all found in the *Cosmic Handbook*)—hired by Megastar and other Argent agents. Unlike many machines, the Stellar Font and its reploid creations are entitled to Will resistance checks to avoid being controlled.

Heroes who can read minds may uncover a weird "blank" when interacting with a reploid and risk revealing their true nature earlier than anticipated. You can play coy, implying these individuals have a high Will defense or alien psionic abilities that protect them, or you can let the tactic work as a way for the heroes to "sniff out" infiltrators, rewarding them for their power choices. You can instead decide the Font implants programmed memories into its reploids, applying a –5 penalty on any opposed checks to recognize the reploid as a fake before they are "activated."

INVOLVING THE HEROES...

Heroes can become involved with *Prodigal Sun* in a number of ways:

- The most obvious hook is for a major cosmic player like Daedalus to approach the heroes and ask them to investigate a recent chroma shift in the star of the Flegere System, a sudden change that has the system's settlers understandably concerned.
- Star Knights or heroes aligned with that faction may be asked by Mentor to investigate the Flegere system and act as mediators between the increasingly hostile colonists. The heroes may be joined by a noteworthy Star Knight, such as Maria Montoya, who offers them guidance and insight but focuses on guarding against planetside dangers while the heroes focus on the thefts.
- Heroes battling against the expansion of the Stellar Imperium may hear of the strife erupting in the former Lor colony system of Flegere, as well as Imperium warships dispatched to "pacify" the system and bring it under formal control. The heroes must not only stay the violence and stop Megastar's plot, but also ally the bickering planets and the AI against an outside invasion!

- News spreads of Blackstar's disappearance while lurking around the Flegere System. Several interstellar factions seek hard evidence that the cosmos is truly free of Blackstar's villainy, so they enlist the heroes to investigate. Alternatively, agents of the Blackguard may secretly recruit mercenaries to investigate their leader's disappearance.

In settings other than the Earth-Prime cosmos, you can place the Stellar Font within any star, replacing the various alien species with those found in that setting. The star's sudden chroma shift warrants investigation even prior to the escalating tensions between the planets' major factions. Scattered reports about the situation appear in stellar broadcasts, accompanied by theories from an impending super nova to an overflow of cosmic pollution to the religious heralding of a forgotten space god. With the rest of the galaxy's chaos, few outsiders have the time or ability to investigate. Even if the characters are unfamiliar with the history or the specific villains involved, the obvious menace to their home galaxy should send heroes into action.

THE FLEGERE SYSTEM

A Lor Republic survey vessel discovered the planetary system orbiting the Stellar Font forty Earth years ago and named it Flegere (after the captain's mother). With several planets rich in natural resources—seeded eons ago by the Preservers in anticipation of construction efforts—the Flegere system was scheduled for immediate colonization. Now the four inhabited worlds host a combined population of just over one billion sentient beings. Even with the ominous chroma shift of their sun, many inhabitants are hesitant to abandon their homes.

The four inhabited planets, Blume, Deepsea, Fennick, and Krine, are detailed in the following section along with their dominant alien species and global leaders. For more information on these species, consult pages 134–135 of the *Cosmic Handbook*.

- **Blume:** Lor settlers colonized this primitive world—largely consisting of marine life and some land lichens—and transformed it into an eden that produces most of the system's food crops. The family-minded Governor Endara rules over the colony and its residents have poured all their available funds into colonizing and terraforming Blume, leaving them ill-equipped to evacuate.
- **Deepsea:** Colonized primarily by hexxim engineers who focus on engine research, this ocean world contains rich deposits of methane and heavy metals, making it a prime location for innovations. The officious Overseer Gallago directs their world's industry.
- **Fennick:** This desert world contains minerals valuable to its haasaan settlers, who specialize in metallurgy research and mining. The arid planet's leader, Matriarch Benasaam, is aggressive in her defense of her world. The planet is currently struggling to contain a pandemic (unrelated to the larger events) and she worries packing their population together into the confines of a starship would spread the disease.
- **Krine:** This wet, temperate planet made an ideal crèche world for the alligator-like jereid, with families staying temporarily to breed and raise their children for the vulnerable first few years. President Kuusm runs Krine, acting more like a travel minister for the constant influx and outflow of interstellar traffic. Preoccupied with the safety of the planet's many nurseries, the pacifist Kuusm defers to his Minister of War, Raffar (currently a reploid; see **Alien Abductions!**) in these difficult times. The jereid are midway through their nesting season and abandoning or moving their eggs would endanger tens of thousands of their offspring.
- **Iris:** Iris isn't a settled world, but the largest moon orbiting the system's gas giant, the Jewel of Flegere. The moon is icy, with a barely breathable atmosphere and frequent storms, but the colonists built a large trading port here to receive and organize shipments from other systems. In time it grew into a neutral city where the leaders of the four planets could hold tribunals to settle disputes.

Three small, rocky planets—bare of any useful resources—orbit too close to the star to be habitable, and a large gas giant, the Jewel of Flegere, orbits beyond the four habitable worlds. An asteroid belt—the remnants of the Preservers' efforts to mine other planets that once existed in the system—rings the system beyond all its major bodies. The colonists have focused their explorations and attention on their respective worlds and have spent little time exploring the uninhabitable bodies of the system.

ALIEN ABDUCTIONS!

With Megastar's encouragement, the Stellar Font has abducted prominent figures from Flegere's planets and replaced them with reploids. The heroes may interact with these individuals, and you can use their unusual behavior to hint at a larger conspiracy . While not exhaustive, the following list of reploids features in this adventure.

- **Dante Bena:** Replaced six months ago, this Lor official passed legislation reducing security requirements around government facilities—ostensibly as an austerity measure. He reveals his true nature during **Scene 5** as one of the assassins the heroes face. The real Dante perished during his abduction.
- **Raffar Kantidda:** Replaced four months ago, the replacement General Raffar now grants the Argent Alliance covert access to Krine's aerospace industry. He reveals his true nature during **Scene 5**. The real Raffar is held in suspended animation on the Stellar Font (see **Scene 7**).
- **Rojan Lhar:** Better known as Blackstar, this is Megastar's prized reploid. When the heroes interfere with the Font's plans, he sends this reploid against them during **Scene 5**. The heroes encounter the real Blackstar during **Scene 6**.
- **Auroch:** Replicated from Blackstar's memory rather than a captive, this reploid waits for the heroes at the Severed Cyclops in **Scene 4** and poses as the mastermind of the recent thefts. The real Auroch is incarcerated within a Star Knight facility and is oblivious to the events in the Flegere system—the heroes may learn of this if they try to contact the Star Knights to report the villain's presence or defeat.
- **Flow Synvadix:** Replaced nine months ago, this hexxim political attaché provided classified blueprints that assisted the Font's thefts. They work alongside the heroes as an aide in **Scene 3** and reveal their true nature during **Scene 5**, but canny heroes might recognize the alien as more than they seem earlier. The real Flow resides in suspended animation at **Scene 7**.
- **Zloigam Slathizzar:** Replaced two months ago, this infectious diseases expert took advantage of the haasaan's current epidemic to place quarantines on areas the Stellar Font and Megastar needed to infiltrate. Like many other reploid agents, he reveals his true nature during **Scene 5**. The real Zloigam resides in suspended animation at **Scene 7**.

Arriving at Flegere

While some cosmic heroes are capable of traveling through space on their own, *Prodigal Sun* assumes the heroes have their own spacecraft. If the heroes have yet to acquire one, Daedalus (or another NPC) can lend them a ship like the *Pegasus*-class Spaceplane with an auto-pilot.

Loaner Pegasus Spaceplane (53 points)

Size Gargantuan **STR** 15 **SPEED** 11 (air) **DEF** 6 **TOU** 13
Features: Autopilot 2, Communications 2, Navigation System 3 (+15), Remote Control, Senses 11 (Darkvision, Direction Sense, Radar [Accurate Radius Radio, Extended 2], Time Sense), Space Travel 2

Scene 1 — Conflict Scene

Cosmic Encounter

As the heroes enter the Flegere System, read or paraphrase the following to the players:

> The gentle motion of dropping from hyperspace is suddenly jarred by explosions as you enter normal space between two opposing warships!
>
> With a second lurch, two hailing beacons simultaneously ping on the ship's command console, and before they can be silenced, two angry visages appear—a craggy, yellow-eyed reptilian with rows of viscious teeth and a snake-like woman covered in glassy scales. The first voice, low and gruff, booms, "I am Sky Commodore Em'Thellethet, of the Krine Congregation, and I demand your surrender and the return of our property!" The second voice, several octaves higher, emits from a scaled mouth and competes with a hiss, "You won't fool me General, call off your mercenaries, admit your theft, or suffer the Matriarch's wrath!"

The descriptive text assumes the heroes arrive by ship. If they travel under their own powers, they receive a telepathic warning from the ships' psychic comms officers instead. The jereid and haasaan ships—commanded by the imposing **Sky Commodore Em'Thellethet** and the imperious **Admiral Cerpetees**, respectively—were embroiled in an old-fashioned standoff, having run into one another while investigating recent large-scale thefts and industrial sabotage on their respective worlds. Ask players to roll for initiative and pressure them for quick responses; both factions are on-edge and assume the new arrivals are their enemy's reinforcements!

Hostile Space

This encounter takes place in the vacuum of space, and heroes not protected from it suffer the effects described in the **Surviving in Space** section of the *Cosmic Handbook* (p. 17) if their ship is damaged.

Brokering Peace

The alien factions arrived here while searching for their stolen goods. Unfortunately the trail went cold when the two factions met, and they mistook each other for the culprit. A successful DC 15 Insight check discerns that both factions want a peaceful solution but are extremely suspicious. Both captains are currently Hostile toward each other and Unfavorable toward the heroes. If the heroes can shift a captain's attitude toward them to Indifferent or better (requiring a successful DC 15 Deception, Intimidation, or Persuasion check) they can make interaction skills checks on behalf of the opposing captain to begin talking them down. Making a check on someone else's behalf imposes a –2 circumstance penalty. If the heroes can improve both captains' attitudes toward their rival to Favorable or better, they are willing to stand down.

So long as the heroes succeed on at least one interaction skill test each round, the captains hold their fire. If the heroes fail their interaction skill tests for a round, fail a check by more than one Degree, or don't attempt to negotiate, the alien warships begin firing on each other and the heroes.

Adversaries

The two fleets came prepared to battle whoever has been raiding their respective worlds. Sky Commodore Em'Thellethet's fleet consists of a jeried battleship and twice as many space fighters as there are heroes. Admiral Cerpetees fleet consists of two hasaan cruisers and twice as many space fighters as there are heroes (for a total of four fighters per hero). If combat breaks out, roughly half the fighters attack the heroes while the larger capital ships take turns firing on the newcomers and each other.

Roleplaying Em'Thellethet

Sky Commodore Em'Thellethet speaks with a low, wet voice that resonates from his ample crocodilian snout. He is loud and boisterous, and a favored subordinate of General Raffar. Thet, as his friends call him, has no idea his commanding officer has been replaced with a reploid but is concerned about Krine's increasingly hostile stance toward their neighbors. Like most local jeried, he came here to raise a family and wants to focus on domestic matters and safety rather than war.

Roleplaying Admiral Cerpetees

Admiral Cerpetees hisses in shrill, condescending tones and does not suffer fools lightly. She is a career politician, requiring a regular term of military service on Fennick. Her preference for domestic affairs and chronic motion sickness leave the Admiral with a terrible temper on patrol rotations, and so she is quick to judge and frequently exhausted. Her biggest concern is safeguarding the considerable investment in both money and lives the hasaan have paid in settling Fennick.

Ship-to-Ship Combat

Taking place in the vacuum of space, the heroes battle the aliens' ships rather than aliens directly.

Piloted Fighter — PL 7

Minions. See the **Cast** section.

Combat — **Initiative +2**

Blasters	+4	Ranged, Damage 10

Dodge	Parry	Fortitude	Will	Toughness
+3	+1	+4	+11	+4

HAASAAN CRUISERS (2) PL 10

See the **Cast** section.

COMBAT — INITIATIVE +4

Beam Weapons	+10	Ranged, Damage 10
Hull Dampener	+12	Ranged, Weaken Toughness 8

DODGE	PARRY	FORTITUDE	WILL	TOUGHNESS
+4	+0	—	—	+16

A Haasaan Cruiser may fire its Beam Weapon and Hull Dampener for a total of two attacks each round, due to its crew operating multiple weapon systems. The cruisers may only move once each round.

JEREID BATTLESHIP PL 11

See the **Cast** section.

COMBAT — INITIATIVE +0

Blaster Cannons	+8	Ranged, Damage 12
Energy Torpedoes	+10	Ranged, Burst Area Damage 12, Homing

DODGE	PARRY	FORTITUDE	WILL	TOUGHNESS
+0	+0	—	—	+20

The Jereid Battleship may fire its Blaster Cannons twice and launch one Energy Torpedo each round, for a total of three attacks each round due to its crew operating multiple weapon systems. The battleship may only move once each round.

Once either of the two haasaan cruisers or the jereid battleship are Staggered or rendered inoperative, the aliens hail the heroes asking for clemency. If granted, the aliens leave the conflicted space and contact the heroes later.

WRAP-UP

If the heroes treated the two factions honorably, the captains allow them to proceed into the system. If the heroes defeat one captain or the other in combat, they can likewise proceed. One of the commanders contacts them a short time later with the following message:

> "I have been asked to convey an invitation for you to Iris, the neutral moon orbiting the system's gas giant. The joint planets of Flegere use this installation as a neutral meeting place to convene and discuss matters of systemwide importance. They wish to discern your motives and skills."

If the heroes engaged the ships in combat, the captain also issues a formal apology.

> "I mistook your sudden arrival for enemy reinforcements. These are uncertain times and I acted rashly. Please accept my apologies for the engagement, and the joint planets offer full clemency for the damages."

If the heroes destroyed both fleets, the Lor Governor Endara invites the heroes to the tribunal instead.

Award the players a Hero Point each if the heroes avoid a violent confrontation or show mercy to the aliens.

RED HERRINGS

The investigation portion of this adventure includes several red herrings meant to keep the players guessing, but that may create rabbit holes the heroes follow to the exclusion of the main plot. For your ease, here are the major red herrings and what the heroes discover if they investigate:

- **President Kuusm:** The absence of Krine's leader seems suspicious, but the venerable jereid places greater importance on the safety of his planet's nurseries than on politics. He frequently sends representatives to Iris in his place. If interviewed, he says his delegate, General Raffar, is a capable replacement. If pressed, he mentions the usually steely Raffar seems distracted—something he attributes to Raffar's concern over a recently foiled kidnapping attempt against the president. In reality, the kidnapping was a ploy to get Kuusm to further isolate himself and leave General Raffar the de facto leader of Krine. Unless specifically asked, Kuusm doesn't mention the kidnapper dissolved into a puddle of silver fluid upon his death.
- **Overseer Gallago:** The acrid hexxim is adversarial not out of guilt, but because Gallago is xenophobic. Investigating this condescending hexxim uncovers a squeaky-clean reputation, iron-clad alibis, and a quiet love of therapod wrestling vids.
- **The Blackguard:** Initial investigations all point to the Blackguard Auroch. Any attempts to contact the Blackguards directly leave the heroes conversing with a green-skinned imp lounging on a black throne—sycophant Gravik. The imp hurls childish insults until they tire of him, but if outraged Gravik lets slip that the Blackguard would never waste their time on a backwater system like Flegere while their leader is missing.

SCENE 2 ROLEPLAY SCENE

THE TRIBUNAL

A neutral meeting site exists on the moon of Iris, where Flegere's power brokers gather in a tribunal made up of the four planetary leadersto scrutinize the heroes' motives for entering their system.

Once the heroes land, settle in, and arrive in the Tribunal Hall, read or paraphrase the following:

> An airy chamber allows a spectacular vantage of the swirling gas giant overhead. Underneath this vista is a hovering platform, encircled by a dozen floating seats filled with nervous politicians. The crescendo of their blabber suddenly dims as four regal figures approach the platform.
>
> As they sit, a blue-skinned human woman speaks with a song-like quality, "Welcome outsiders, I am Governor Endara of the Planet Blume, and I speak for the residents of the Flegere system. You have arrived at a dire moment in our short history, and many on this council find the timing of your arrival—coinciding with escalating thefts and violence—suspicious. So tell us, what are your intentions in these difficult times?"

Allow the heroes time to present their case and good intentions for arriving within the Flegere system, or speak on behalf of any authority

that dispatched them. Whether the heroes' motives involve investigating the sun's recent chroma shift, identifying agents of the Stellar Khanate, or investigating the disappearance of the villain Blackstar, the planetary leaders remain cautiously optimistic regarding them.

Once the heroes present their motives, the Tribunal requests they answer some questions before deciding how to proceed.

To settle their concerns, each of the four leaders addresses the heroes. For each interaction, the heroes must select one of three approaches and attempt the associated check. Heroes can roll a DC 15 Insight check or use the Mind Reading effect prior to answering the leader to determine what they hope to hear and the approach that leader favors. Not all approaches are equal—some leaders prefer guile (Deception), some prefer aggression (Intimidation), others prefer politicking (Persuasion) or an intellectual approach (Expertise). Each time the heroes answer, the particular leader provides a vote of "confidence" if they succeed on the associated skill check or "no confidence" if they fail. The heroes must choose one from their group to address each leader, although the heroes may make this a team check. The heroes must attain at least two votes of confidence to win the Tribunal's trust.

If the heroes destroyed the allied force during **Scene 1**, they receive a –5 circumstance penalty on their checks while addressing Matriarch Benasaam and General Raffar.

The specific interactions (and the suggested tones of the alien leaders) are presented in alphabetical order, but feel free to vary the order as you wish, depending on which leader speaks first.

Matriarch Benasaam

A heavily robed, serpent-like haasaan with a breathing apparatus rises before her peers. She hisses mechanically towards the heroes:

> "My fleet admiral met these foreigners, and she speaks of their prowess in battle. I don't like my time wasted, so I won't waste theirs. Tell us, newcomers, what can you offer to investigate and the settle the sabotage, robbery, and destruction plaguing us?"

Deception (DC 12; favored): Examples include exaggerating a situation that showcases the hero's abilities and powers, or suggesting they already have strong leads or insights.

Intimidation (DC 15): Examples include making a show of boasting, demonstrating destructive abilities, or challenging the Matriarch to a contest of strength or wits.

Persuasion (DC 22): Examples include describing similar situations the heroes have settled using their skills or arguing for a balance between investigating material concerns with the strange behavior of the sun.

Governor Endara

The Lor governor remains seated, gazing intently at the assembled heroes as she makes her address:

> "Hopeful friends, you have quite literally arrived under an ill omen in the stars; assure me that you have our best intentions at heart."

Deception (DC 22): Examples include placating the governor or telling her what she wants to hear.

Persuasion (DC 17): Examples include being frank and political, or leaning on credentials.

Expertise (Science) (DC 13; favored): Examples include demonstrating theories or expertise about the shift in the sun's color and how it can't be scientifically tied to the heroes' arrival.

Overseer Gallago

The hexxim floats dramatically out of their chair and telepathically addresses those assembled:

> "Ah azure Endara, you wish to involve these outsiders in our affairs, but how do we know they are not the cause of our woes? I am not so ready to trust trespassers. I demand you convince me that you aren't simply hounds tugging at the leash of the Star Khan and his invading armies."

Intimidation (DC 13; favored): Examples include threatening the overseer for even suggesting a connection with the Star Khan or the Imperium or turning their own accusation back on them, implying *they* may serve the Imperium.

Persuasion (DC 23): Examples include a measured denouncement of the Stellar Imperium's conquest or professing opposition to the Star Khan and his goals.

Deception or Expertise (Alien Civilization or Villains) (DC 18): Examples include providing a thorough account of the Star Khan's past movements and activities and how the heroes' own actions either don't intersect or directly oppose the tyrant.

General Raffar

The crocodilian General Raffar rises unevenly and croaks out:

> "I speak for President Kuusm, who cannot attend these proceedings, but I also speak for the military of Krine, who were smugly disrespected by these invaders. They are clearly vagrants! How can we expect any level of commitment from such hollow-hearted transients?"

Insight: In addition to the usual benefits of a successful DC 15 Insight check to read Raffar's motives, two or more Degrees of Success reveal his behavior seems somehow stilted and awkward, perhaps even rehearsed. Raffar is a reploid, though the heroes likely won't learn this until later in the adventure.

Deception (DC 24): Examples include lying to pledge their loyalty or exaggerating the heroes' loyalty to allied parties.

Intimidation (DC 19): Examples include outrage over questioning their honor or false bravado about always completing any job.

Persuasion (DC 14, favored): Examples include honestly addressing Raffar's concerns or the heroes presenting themselves as professionally as possible.

After the heroes address Raffar, their interview is complete and they are asked to return to their ship to await the Tribunal's decision.

Aftermath

If the heroes succeeded in their interaction skill checks with two or more leaders, the tribunal invites them back to enlist their aid (see **Scene 3**). General Raffar is visibly outraged with the decision to employ the heroes—as a reploid, he would prefer to keep the system factions fighting among themselves rather than risk mediators settling their affairs.

If the heroes fail to garner at least two votes of confidence, they aren't officially sanctioned by the tribunal to act as investigators. Governor Endara provides them with the factions' collective research and implores them to secretly work on their behalf (offering incentives, if necessary), but the authorities from other planets in the system may become a complicating factor at your discretion.

Scene 3 Investigation

Triangulating the Trouble

Soon, the tribunal invites the heroes back to the council chamber where they have set up holographic display systems to show footage of the various crimes plaguing the planets' industries over recent months. They have free run of Iris and access to a small flock of assistants from the various planets eager to provide them with whatever information they need.

The heroes can take some downtime and interact in this scene as well. Many residents of the Flegere system haven't had many visitors since the Republic's collapse and are eager for news. Others might idolize the agencies the heroes work for, such as the Star Knights. Iris provides some time to play up the heroes' Complications, particularly to help make the investigation longer or more difficult.

The unusually gregarious and energetic hexxim **Flow** appoints themself the project manager for the mixed band of assistants, and is eager to make sure the heroes are well-fed, well-rested, and catered to in every way. In reality, Flow is another reploid keeping an eye on the newcomers and feeding intelligence back to Megastar and the Stellar Font. They won't attempt to undermine the heroes' efforts, instead acting purely in an observational role to help their Argent masters set up a trap at the Severed Cyclops.

Strange Crimes

Reviewing the official documents reveals a series of seemingly unrelated thefts and bizarre acts of industrial sabotage, including the following:

- **Blume:** Theft of dried foodstuffs, particularly fruits and nuts, as well as industrial insecticides and focal lenses for high-powered telescopes. Sabotage of aquaponic gardens growing bulk protein algae used as a frequent food supplement.
- **Deepsea:** Theft of powerful neodymium magnets, x-ray tubes, and starship air scrubbers. Sabotage of engine testing facilities.
- **Fennick:** Thefts of detergent formulations and bleaching agents, anodes from high-power batteries, and large quantities of medications used to treat various mental disorders. Sabotage of the solar mirrors used to regulate the desert world's surface temperature and moderate weather extremes.
- **Krine:** Pyrotechnics and flares to celebrate the next hatching season, emeralds, and heat shield panels for satellites have been stolen, and neonatal facilities sabotaged.

Thefts

While the thefts initially seem unconnected, an appropriate DC 25 Expertise check such as Physics, Science, or Technology reveals all of the thefts involve items rich in three particular elements: boron, beryllium, and lithium, the only three elements not created from stellar reactions alone. The creation of these elements involves cosmic ray spallation, a rare event where a powerful burst of gamma radiation launches into heavier elements—ones created in a star—blasting them apart to create these lighter elements. Unknown to any of the system's current residents, the Preservers manufactured these resources in abundance eons ago to seed the planets with the elements the Stellar Font couldn't produce on its own. If the heroes think to ask any planetary representatives, they comment that the system was fast-tracked for colonization because of the abundance of those particular elements, which are normally rare.

Sabotage

While the thefts do have a strange thread connecting them, the acts of sabotage seem random. A DC 15 Insight check, however, realizes that while the sabotages have no obvious economic or military motives, they do target things with deep emotional importance to their respective species. If someone wanted to put the people of the Flegere system at each other's throats, this is the way to do it.

Investigations

As the heroes view recordings of the crimes in succession, they may take note of a common element at each of the crime scenes. A DC 18 Investigation or Perception check while reviewing the footage notes a vehicle filmed near each crime scene, flying away moments before the local authorities arrive. (Heroes may attempt this check once per hour, and gain a +2 circumstance bonus after the first hour, improving to +5 after four hours.) The common vehicle is a silver and black space freighter with a distinctive marking on its fore panel: a snarling, one-eyed face. The heroes can request additional footage of this vehicle as it flees each scene and track the freighter's flight trajectory as it escapes each planet's atmosphere.

With this data, the heroes can triangulate the getaway craft's trajectory, requiring a successful DC 15 Expertise (Astrogation) check, which leads them to the coordinates of the abandoned Severed Cyclops station. Heroes can use Expertise (Military, Science, or Tactics) to perform the triangulation, but with a –2 circumstance modifier.

Wrap-Up

If the heroes successfully triangulate the freighter's trajectories, award each player a Hero Point.

If the heroes failed to learn about the flight trajectories, Overseer Gallago and their security crew eventually triangulate the flight paths. The six-armed bureaucrat shares this information, but not without first belittling their lack of progress.

However the heroes acquire the flight trajectories, the triangulation leads them to Flegere's asteroid belt— beyond the orbits of its planets—and specifically an abandoned mining operation colloquially referred to as "The Severed Cyclops". A sensor scan reveals energy surges emitting from this abandoned site, suggesting new activity that coincides with the timelines of the recent thefts. A successful DC 15 Investigation check to ask about the site leads to a few elderly ex-miners who used to work out of the station before it was decommissioned 20 years ago, who describe it as an "old industrial station that used to process the asteroid ore we'd bring back. Wasn't worth much back then. It's probably worth even less now." Built during the earliest phases of colonization and all but forgotten, there is no additional information about the station.

With the discovery of the Severed Cyclops, the tribunal tasks the heroes with investigating the site and returning any of their planets' stolen property.

Scene 4 Challenge/Conflict Scene

The Severed Cyclops

When the heroes arrive at the Severed Cyclops, read or paraphrase the following:

> A metallic docking portal awkwardly pierces the colossal asteroid, giving the drab space rock the appearance of a petrified cyclops head. A soft artificial glow beams from the "eye socket," marking the port of entry. A shuttered door a hundred feet in diameter spirals open in this socket, revealing glimpses of the titanic asteroid's hollow interior, lined with industrial walkways and equipment.

The Severed Cyclops is a large "beehive" style station carved into the rock of a thousand-foot-wide asteroid. The interior still has power and supports an atmosphere, suggesting someone has recently reactivated the derelict site. Most of its interior is a single, massive ore processing plant, with a few corridors leading off for air scrubbers, power plants, storage, a mess hall, and bunk-style sleeping quarters. Force fields at the "eye" allow ships to enter and exit for loading without losing the station's atmosphere. Massive stockpiles of stolen goods are stacked within the processing plant, waiting to be teleported to the Stellar Font.

An abandoned black and silver freighter matching the vessel fleeing the various crime scenes orbits the Severed Cyclops like a buzzing insect. The vessel's missing reploid crew retreated to the Stellar Font facility via the teleportation ring inside the station.

Once inside, the heroes find themselves exploring a seemingly abandoned mining facility filled with a partial inventory of the four colonies' pilfered resources. The automated machinery softly hums as it runs on a power saving mode amid several flickering computer screens. Hacking one of the facility's many terminals requires a DC 15 Technology check and reveals the facility's purpose is to teleport the stolen goods directly into Flegere's sun. With two or more Degrees of Success, the heroes uncover transmissions between Auroch and Blackstar detailing a grandiose scheme to darken every sun in the cosmos, using the Flegere system as a test run. While strange and nihilistic, this massive dump of materials into the sun *might* account for the star's recent chroma shift, but is an incredibly slow and wasteful approach to planetary annihilation. These transmissions are falsified records Megastar wants the heroes to find. The messages, along with the reploid copy of the Blackguard Auroch, are intended to fool the heroes into thinking they've solved the crime and keep them from examining the teleporter logs too closely.

It's a Trap!!!

Within the asteroid, several robotic alien walkers hide behind mounds of stolen goods, led by a reploid copy of the Blackguard Auroch. There is one walker for each hero.

Heroes may take notice of an impending ambush with a Precognition effect or a DC 19 Perception check. However, due to the clanking, oil-stained machinery cluttering the asteroid's innards, the heroes take a –5 penalty on any sight- or hearing-based sense checks.

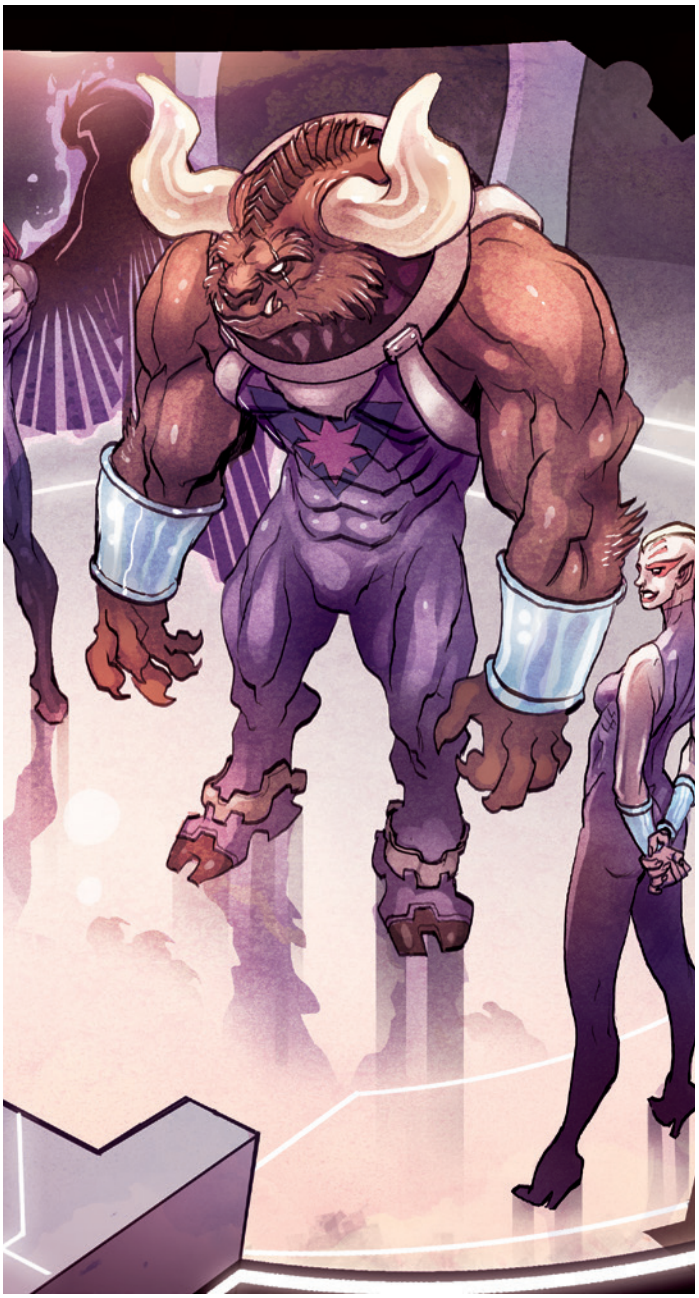
If the heroes fail to notice the ambush they are surprised, leaving them Stunned and Vulnerable the first round of combat.

During the scene, the whirring industrial machinery may complicate the heroes' efforts. You can activate the following Complication by giving the affected player a Hero Point. Heroes can likewise take advantage of the industrial equipment by spending a Hero Point.

Conveyer Belt

Metallic clasps spring from the facility's floor and wall panels. Treat this as an Affliction 12 effect (Resisted by Dodge, Overcome by Escape Artist or Damage; Hindered, Immobile, Paralyzed), with affected characters secured to a moving conveyor belt. The conveyer counts as unstable terrain, imposing a –2 circumstance penalty on attack checks, skill checks, and active defenses unless the character has the Movement (sure-footed) effect.

After 3 rounds, the conveyor delivers anyone still restrained into an industrial hazard, such as a rock crusher, laser welder, or titanium sawblade, inflicting Damage 12 each round.



ADVERSARIES

A group of robot walkers emerge from behind the chaotic machinery and advance on the heroes. Floating above this group is a minotaur-like alien warrior clutching an axe made from pure darkness. A successful DC 20 Expertise (Alien Cultures or Villains) check identifies this figure as Auroch, a high-ranking leader within the Blackguard. Unknown to the heroes, this Auroch is a reploid created from the captive Blackstar's memories (see **Scene 7**) and empowered by transmitting the power of Blackstar's Shadow Bands from his prison on the Stellar Font. When Auroch fails a Toughness check by two or more Degrees, he "bleeds" a silvery fluid, and when Incapacitated he dissolves into a puddle of silvery goo.

ROLEPLAYING THE REPLOIDS

The Stellar Font programmed Auroch to impart false information to the heroes to hide the Argent Alliance's true motives. During the fight, Auroch eagerly informs them of their plans to darken Flegere's sun as a test-run for a galaxy-wide plot. A successful DC 19 Insight check is enough to realize the Blackguard is lying.

If the heroes have encountered Auroch previously, his behavior seems strange, more like a parody than the real warrior.

The reploid self-destructs if captured, dissolving into a silvery puddle.

REPLOID AUROCH — PL 12

See the **Cast** section.

COMBAT		INITIATIVE +1
Blinding	+10	Ranged, Affliction 10
Dark Blast	+10	Ranged, Damage 10
Shadow Weapons	+11	Close, Damage 13
Unarmed	+8	Close, Damage 7

DODGE	PARRY	FORTITUDE	WILL	TOUGHNESS
+8	+8	+13	+10	+15/5*

*without Shadow Shield

ALIEN WALKERS — PL 10

Minions. See the **Cast** section.

COMBAT		INITIATIVE +2
Blaster	+10	Ranged, Damage 10
Unarmed	+8	Close, Damage 12

DODGE	PARRY	FORTITUDE	WILL	TOUGHNESS
+6	+6	+12	+6	+14

WRAP-UP

With the reploid Auroch defeated, Megastar hopes the heroes will decide the threat is over and leave the Flegere system to hunt the real Blackguards elsewhere.

Heroes with the appropriate scientific tools or Senses like microscopic vision can learn the silvery fluid Auroch dissolves into is a collection of nanomachines suspended in an unusual, almost organic metal fluid.

Investigating the teleport platform in the Severed Cyclops confirms it has been used to send much of the stolen material into the sun, but attempting to follow would be suicide and attempting to retrieve the goods from the corona only delivers a blast of solar plasma (Burst Area Damage 12)—the Stellar Font facility drifts on the solar currents and targeting it with the teleporter requires an encryption key carried only by Megastar and the reploid Blackstar.

Once the heroes dispatch the villain and his minions, they can return what remains of the stolen goods to the colonists along with any information they learned detailing Auroch's supposed plans. Worried at the "confirmation" of the Blackguards' involvement in their system, Flegere's power brokers call for the heroes' presence at Iris once again to ask them for further assistance.

SCENE 5 — CONFLICT SCENE

BLACKSTAR'S REVENGE

While Megastar hoped his plan would lure the heroes away, the child-like AI of the Stellar Font has found the constant bickering between the planets quite amusing, and with all that about to end it has grown frustrated. The computer mind wants to accelerate the coming war, and so prepares to activate its reploid agents to assassinate the planetary leaders of Flegere.

When the heroes return to Iris, read or paraphrase the following:

> Applause rings throughout the tribunal chamber in recognition of a job well done. Amid this ovation, Overseer Gallago abruptly silences the diplomats with a wave of tentacles. "Please, it's nothing we couldn't have figured out ourselves, isn't that right?"
>
> The serpentine Matriarch Benasaam hisses back sharply, "Gallago, these are our guests…"
>
> "Guests?! Are you so eager to forget they violated your space and threatened your ships, Benasaam!"
>
> Before the haasaan can finish, General Raffar exclaims, "I've had enough of your arrogance, Gallago, it ends now!" As the last word exits his crocodilian maw, the General rakes his sharp claws against the hexxim's fluid-filled survival suit, tearing it open. A collective gasp echoes from the diplomats.
>
> The horrified Overseer gargles a feeble word as they struggle to breathe without their environmental suit. "Help."

The heroes can step in to stop the violence or stand by and watch—Gallago has opposed them repeatedly and acted suspiciously—but after a moment much of the crowd begins to panic and aides usher Matriarch Benasaam and Governor Endara away amid a stampede of terrified diplomats. Any failed Toughness check by Raffar reveals silvery blood identical to the fluid Auroch and the alien walkers left when defeated.

Raffar and six of the aides in the room—including the heroes' assistant, Flow—are actually reploid agents of the Stellar Font preparing to assassinate the planetary leaders and spark an interplanetary war. The heroes can spot aides drawing weapons on Matriarch Benasaam and Governor Endara in distant corners of the hall with a Successful DC 20

Perception check. If the heroes injured Raffar or otherwise stepped in to stop his attack on Gallago, they gain a +5 circumstance bonus on this check.

Healing Gallago

Gallago is Incapacitated by Raffar's initial attack. The hexxim struggles to breathe without their now-useless environmental suit and will die in 5 rounds without aid. Stabilizing their injuries requires the Healing power or a successful DC 15 Treatment check. Helping Gallago breathe requires either a successful DC 20 Technology check to jury-rig their suit or finding a suitable source of saline water.

If a hero saves or helps save Gallago, award them a Hero Point.

Roleplaying the Reploid Assassins

At this point, ask the heroes to roll initiative. Two reploids attack each planetary leader—Overseer Gallago, Matriarch Benasaam, and Governor Endara. They spend their first turn either attacking the heroes (if they attempt to interfere) or shouting invective slogans loud enough for panicked witnesses to hear, then attack their respective leaders on their second round.

With their covert programming overridden, the reploids no longer focus on maintaining their distinct personalities. They speak as one and move unnaturally, bending their joints at strange angles and shaking off devastating injuries. Against hardened targets (like superheroes), they use power attacks and team attacks to overwhelm defenses.

Reploid Assassins (6) — PL 9

Minions. See the **Cast** section.

Combat — Initiative +12

Blaster Pistol	+15	Ranged, Damage 5 (Crit 19–20)
Unarmed	+12	Close, Damage 5

Dodge	Parry	Fortitude	Will	Toughness
+13	+13	+9	+9	+5/3*

*without Defensive Roll

Blackstar Rising

Back at the Stellar Font, Megastar realizes his AI companion has deviated from the plan and activates his Blackstar reploid to try and "fix" the chaos unfolding on Iris. After the second round of combat, read or paraphrase the following to the players:

> One wall of the council chamber explodes inward, revealing a darkly handsome man with a tidy beard and a black costume—Blackstar! His voice booms, "Raffar, you will make an excellent Blackguard after the chaos you have spread for me here! Enemies of the light, attack!" The assassins, as well as several members of the panicked crowd, jerk and retrain their cold, silvery eyes on you.

Blackstar's arrival activates several "sleeper" reploids hidden in the crowd. Add one reploid assassin for each hero, which join any remaining assassins in attacking the heroes directly.

Roleplaying the Reploid Blackstar

A copy of the original Blackstar, the reploid is empowered by the Stellar Font transmitting power from the original villain's Shadow Bands to the copy. This gives the duplicate the same powers as Blackstar at slightly reduced levels.

This copy of Rojan Lhar is more accurate than the copy of Auroch, being made from Blackstar himself rather than just memories. He can interact with the heroes and remembers them if they have previously met. Like all the other reploids, he melts into silvery goo if defeated or captured. Despite looking and sounding like Blackstar, this copy lacks the original's mastery of his powers and uses them as a blunt instrument, lashing out mostly with his Dark Blast and only occasionally trying creative applications like isolating heroes in a Shadow Construct.

Reploid Blackstar — PL 13

See the **Cast** section.

Combat — Initiative +2

Dark Blast	+12	Ranged, Damage 14
Unarmed	+8	Close, Damage 1

Dodge	Parry	Fortitude	Will	Toughness
+10	+10	+12	+14	+16/2*

*without Shadow Shield

Reploid Assassins (6) — PL 9

Minions. See the **Cast** section.

Combat — Initiative +12

Blaster Pistol	+15	Ranged, Damage 5 (Crit 19–20)
Unarmed	+12	Close, Damage 5

Dodge	Parry	Fortitude	Will	Toughness
+13	+13	+9	+9	+5/3*

*without Defensive Roll

Wrap-Up

Blackstar and the assassins dissolve upon defeat or capture, just like Auroch and his robots, but Blackstar and Raffar leave something solid behind: encryption keys for a teleporter pad. These keys can predict the movements of the Stellar Font within the system's sun and, if plugged into the teleporter on the Severed Cyclops, will teleport any cargo or creatures present to the Preserver facility. If the heroes investigate any of the aides' homes, it becomes obvious they were replaced months ago, and their private files include details required to plan the various thefts and acts of sabotage. The only thing missing one would expect to find among a spy's belongings is a way to communicate with one another or a handler (all handled via the Stellar Font).

Any surviving planetary leaders thank the heroes for saving them, particularly Gallago if they survived the ordeal. The hexxim admits they were biased in their judgement and apologizes for complicating the heroes' work. If the heroes didn't manage to save any of the planetary leaders, interim replacements take their place and are understanding about the heroes' failure, but deeply concerned.

To reach the source of the strange reploids terrorizing the station, the heroes must return to the Severed Cyclops. This is their last opportunity to rest or prepare before confronting the master of the Stellar Font!

Scene 6 — Roleplay Scene

Enemy Mine

Once the heroes activate the Severed Cyclops teleportation platform, read or paraphrase the following:

> The scene shifts instantaneously amid a kaleidoscopic swirl of energy before fading away to reveal a colossal receiving bay awash in a blinding light. Overhead, a swirling pool of plasma casts the room in harsh, red light. The sounds of a skirmish echo throughout the chamber, the same voice echoing from many sources at once.
>
> Just as quickly as this chorus roars, the multitude of voices is suddenly silenced as the room comes into focus. Amid a sea of identical black-clad corpses slumps a sole version victorious against its many doppelgangers. The wounds of the motionless bleed a familiar silver fluid, but the man still standing bleeds red.
>
> He smiles defiantly and proclaims, "And just who are you to keep Blackstar prisoner?"

The man standing boldly amid the dispatched corpses is the real Blackstar, Rojan Lhar, surrounded by a half-dozen reploid copies of himself. The heroes' defeat of his reploid at Iris created a feedback loop in the power being channeled from his Shadow Bands, blasting the villain loose from his containment pod. The bodies at Rojan's feet begin dissolving into silver fluid as the heroes approach.

Blackstar initially believes the heroes to be his jailers and is ready for a fight, although he has taken a beating; he currently has a –5 penalty to Toughness checks. His initial attitude is Hostile, but he is predisposed to negotiate. If the heroes claim innocence or seem confused, that's all the excuse he needs to stand down. If the heroes attack, he fights back with everything he has left.

If the heroes deal with Blackstar diplomatically, he can offer them something in exchange for teleporting him outside the facility: A Preserver override chip.

The Receiving Bay

The Stellar Font's teleportation platform is in the middle of a massive receiving and storage bay five hundred feet across and eight hundred feet high. Shelves of storage containers line the walls, about half of which contain more stolen materials waiting to be broken down. The rest contain more of the silvery goo—the raw nanotech feed stock the Stellar Font assembles into whatever it needs. The entire station contains a breathable atmosphere.

Overhead is a massive force field keeping the power of the sun at bay, but still revealing the swirling, brilliant light of the solar plasma. The Stellar Font AI can extend this barrier out to form a tunnel through the star's corona and into safe space—letting manufactured ships depart and supply ships arrive—but is unwilling to do so for the heroes. The teleport platform provides the only easy access in or out of the bay. Powered by the sun itself, the force field is PLX and cannot be destroyed through brute force.

Parley

Blackstar just wants to escape his current circumstances. To that end, he is willing to offer intelligence about his captors in exchange for the teleporter access code the heroes acquired earlier. If the heroes agree to listen to Blackstar's condescending parley, he happily imparts his knowledge. If the heroes prefer to go on without his information, he simply steps aside and presses them no more. The villain is confident he can find another way off the sun-station, or beat it out of the heroes later, and he's happy to let these newcomers make trouble for the Argents.

If the heroes agree to Blackstar's exchange, the heroes can question him to learn more about the situation:

How did you get captured?

"I came out to this backwater when my Shadow Bands detected some form of Preserver technology. Then that brat with the silver skin ambushed me. I awoke in some kind of stasis pod and heard the child arguing with the AI here, but couldn't focus enough to break free. Then a short while ago something overloaded my Shadow Bands and they blasted me free. I have been destroying these clones ever since."

What are these things (the corpses)?

"Nanotech reploids. They use that nanofluid to create unlimited copies. Running them off like a factory."

What is this silvery sludge?

"Nanomachines, programmable matter they can shape into almost anything."

Where are we?

"Inside Flegere's sun. Looks like a Preserver station. A million years old. Maybe more. The AI in charge called itself theStellar Font."

What is the Stellar Font?

"It's all this, and the old Preserver computer that runs it. A factory, but on a cosmic scale."

Who is the brat/kid you mentioned?

"An Argent. Human, from Earth. A child playing with weapons he doesn't understand."

Who/What are the Preservers?

"Are you new to this galaxy? The Preservers were alien busybodies a million years ago that flew all over creation tinkering with every planet's genetics and building doomsday weapons."

Who are the Argents?

"Fanatics and fools led by another of the Preservers' precious AIs: Tellax the Redeemer. It enhances its biological lackeys with nanites, like the technology here."

How can we trust you?

"What makes you think you're worth lying to?"

What is the Argents' plan?

"Sounds like they're building an armada of warships, an army of reploids, and something they're calling a 'stellar engine'. That will give Tellax a whole collection of new toys and soldiers, and a pet sun to make more. Of course, all the planets orbiting this star will get flung off into the cold void of space in the process..."

What can we expect ahead?

"You expect me to do everything for you? There are some automated factories and manufacturing plazas powered by the station's control center. That control hub is where you want to be, it's the brain of the Stellar Font."

Can you help us?

"I didn't live this long by fighting losing battles. I'm only interested in leaving, and coming back with enough Blackguards to tear this star apart . But I'll make you a deal: activate the teleporter and send me out of here and I'll make it worth your while."

What can you offer us?

"Practical. Now you're talking my language. Give me the teleporter access codes that will get me clear of this station, and I'll give you a little secret. It's a Preserver override chip, a safeguard they used to shut down their old installations. Insert it into the command console and you can put the AI back to sleep for another million years."

Rojan is genuine in his offer; he wants out more than he wants revenge and he's entirely unwilling to proceed further into the complex. The heroes can take the override key by force if they overpower the villain instead.

Roleplaying Blackstar

Rojan Lhar is a proud, uncompromising man who believes in his abilities, but he has been in the villain game long enough not to let his pride ruin him. He is confident to the point of arrogance.

Rojan has only been awake a few hours and has spent that time taking out his frustrations on the now-powerless reploids made in his image. In his weakened state he has no interest in confronting an Argent and an advanced AI. Blackstar's sole motivation in this scene is to escape; he's had more than enough of the Stellar Font for now, but he may return with his own forces in the future.

Blackstar — PL 14

See the **Cast** section. Blackstar currently suffers a –5 penalty on all Toughness checks.

Combat — **Initiative +2**

Blinding	+12	Ranged, Affliction 16
Dark Blast	+12	Ranged, Damage 16
Unarmed	+8	Close, Damage 1

Dodge	Parry	Fortitude	Will	Toughness
+10	+10	+12	+16	+18/2*

*without Shadow Shield

Wrap-Up

If the heroes treat Blackstar with respect (or fear), the leader of the Blackguard imparts a final warning. As he steps onto the teleportation platform, he calls back, "The Font had plenty of time to study me and create some fairly convincing reploids. You can be certain it has been scanning the lot of you as well." Then he vanishes.

Several rooms exist between the receiving bay and the Stellar Font's central control hub. Locating this control hub (**Scene 7**) is simple. While inconsequential to the heroes' pursuit of the Stellar Font, you can describe these rooms as holding bays for stolen materials, spawning vats for reploid soldiers, and factories assembling weapons, armor, and starships.

Scene 7 Challenge/Conflict Scene

Me, Myself, and Megastar

When the heroes finally enter the control room, read or paraphrase the following:

> Circular displays and holographic projections surround a massive pillar in the center of the control room, pulsating with light and anchored to the machinery-lined walls by hundreds of glassy conduits. A metal causeway skirts the control room's perimeter, spiraling upward from the entrance toward a command platform high above. Stasis capsules in the wall hold dozens of aliens motionless—many of them familiar faces from Iris.
>
> A sneering, almost child-like face made from a million 1s and 0s flits across the countless monitors, glaring at you before flinging itself up to the command platform where a silver-skinned man with a beard and ponytail grins down at you.
>
> "Well, you've really gone out of your way just to get an ass-kicking." He floats into the air as conduits crack and begin to spill silvery fluid. "I'm Megastar and I'm the law around here. Want to surrender now?"

This final scene is a confrontation between the heroes and the authors of the system's recent troubles. The heroes must not only defeat Megastar, but either shut down the Stellar Font or change its allegiance to protect the residents of the Flegere system, all while fending off doppelgangers created by the ancient Preserver installation.

The Control Room

The control chamber is a massive cylinder 160 feet in diameterand 900 feet high with a sold inner pillar 40 feet in diameter, comprised of technological devices anchored in place via a network of cables and cords. The inner pillar houses the Stellar Font AI, with conduits transporting blank nanite feed stock into the system and carrying programmed nanofluid to the rest of the facility, where it auto-assembles into the required forms. While the conduits and canisters aren't vital to the AI's function, they do provide easy platforms for acrobatic heroes who can't fly, and a character can spend a Move action to take cover behind one.

The conduits and storage cannisters on the walls are all filled with nanite gel that reflects the AI's own codependent and over-defensive nature. Any attack that misses its target (or any area attack) damages a cell or conduit to spill nanite gel, which immediately attacks the nearest hero as an Area Snare 10 with a +10 attack bonus.

The AI's role in this encounter is largely as an observer. It yells at the heroes and shouts warnings to Megastar, but the system isn't designed for combat and can do little more than activate reploid duplicates and issue them orders. The system isn't a simple bystander, however, and sees the heroes as bullies and invaders come to take away its only friend. It provides Megastar with all the nanofluid he needs to bounce back from injuries (see **Roleplaying Megastar**), and may offer moral support if its "big brother" is struggling. If Megastar begins to struggle, the AI can coordinate with the antihero through his Argent systems, providing the equivalent of a +2 Aid bonus on attack rolls each round.

Evil Twins

In **Scene 7**, the heroes battle reploid versions of themselves and a powerful mimic. Before the adventure begins, obtain a copy of their character sheets so you can prep these reploid adversaries.

To increase tensions, you can ask each player to provide a character secret they don't mind revealing, one that could cause a minor embarrassment or dramatically reveal a tense bit of backstory, and have their twin spill the beans. The reploids could reveal an unrequited love, share damning confessions, or expose a character's deepest insecurities. This kind of narrative twist is best handled with the player's input beforehand and with initial discussion away from the game table, such as via e-mail or chat.

Assuming the players agree to this, award each player a Hero Point when their character's secret is is revealed.

A Megastarring Role

After everything that's happened so far, Chris Beck—Megastar—fully expects a fight and is prepared, but part of him wants to believe he can persuade the heroes to accept Tellax's vision of an orderly universe and find purpose the same way he did, so he's willing to talk. Megastar can fill in any bits of backstory the heroes haven't yet uncovered for themselves, but he can't be talked down from his current plan to turn the Stellar Font into a weapon for the Argents.

The AI is less interested in war and mostly just wants companionship. It's excited about having a "family," and the more the heroes talk about stopping Megastar, the angrier the computer grows at them, interrupting to yell that they want to "steal my family," and "You'll leave me all alone like the makers!"

The most unsettling aspect of Megastar's plan is how he'll "spare" the billion residents of the system. He brags about using the Stellar Font to scan them all, so that even if they die when the Stellar Font relocates, he can print new copies of them later, "like nothing ever happened."

If the heroes refuse to cooperate or leave, Megastar sighs and shakes his head before activating their doppelgangers. He comments, "I figured you wouldn't listen to reason. That's why I had the Font make some more accommodating versions."

The doppelgangers use the heroes' own statblocks. If you do not have access to the heroes' statblocks, select appropriate archetypes from the heroes and villains presented in the *Deluxe Hero's Handbook*, the *Deluxe Gamemaster's Guide*, and/or the *Cosmic Handbook*, applying the **Elite** template (*Deluxe Gamemaster's Guide*, p. 157) as necessary to equal the heroes' Power Levels.

Roleplaying the Stellar Font

For better and worse, the Stellar Font is an abandoned child lashing out. It feels rejected by its creators, but Megastar's arrival gave it companionship and a purpose for the first time in millions of years. Now that the heroes have arrived, it is terrified of losing that and being put "back to sleep" and fights back with all the ferocity of a terrified child.

The Stellar Font is utterly devoted to Megastar, in awe of his experience and worldly wisdom like a little brother. It won't betray the Argent unless Megastar turns on it first, but it will try to restrain him if it develops a fondness for the heroes.

ROLEPLAYING MEGASTAR

Tired, impulsive, and angry with how often he feels he's been snubbed by "self-righteous" heroes, Megastar is ready to work out some misplaced aggression on these heroes who've waltzed in and disrupted months of work. Backed up by an army of reploids, he is supremely overconfident and talks down to the heroes as if he'd seen the whole universe by now and that his philosophy—submission to Tellax to bring peace and justice—was the one true path to a peaceful universe.

Unlike the Stellar Font, Megastar is not blindly bonded to his partner in crime. He sees the Font as annoying, impulsive, and needy and is prepared to abandon the AI once he delivers it to Tellax. He'll only admit as much if goaded with Deception skill checks, but heroes can scrutinize his attitude with a successful DC 18 Insight check and realize he doesn't share the computer's fondness.

While supporting Megastar, the Stellar Font sends nanites directly to him, granting him Regeneration 10 as a bonus power and allowing him to reduce damage effects (but not other conditions) once per round, even bouncing back from being Incapacitated.

Megastar is still nursing a wounded ego from his past encounters with heroes and isn't likely to surrender or renounce the Argents, but the heroes might plant the seeds of redemption in his mind. Heroes who share a history with Chris might even talk him down from his plot at your discretion, though not into a full redemption.

THE PRESERVER OVERRIDE CHIP

If the heroes negotiated with Blackstar in **Scene 6**, they might have gained a Preserver override chip, a triangular device that can plug into a Preserver control console (requiring a hero to reach the command platform, hundreds of feet up inside the command chamber) to grant a user administrative control. Inserting the override chip grants a character a +5 circumstance bonus on Deception, Persuasion, and Technology checks made to influence or shut down a Preserver AI. See the **Hacking the Stellar Font** challenge sequence.

You may decide the override chip burns out after one use—a fact Blackstar conveniently leaves out—or that it is a reusable resource cosmic heroes can hold onto for future encounters with Preserver technology.

ROLEPLAYING THE REPLOID DOPPELGANGERS

The reploid copies of the heroes join Megastar in defending the Stellar Font and behave like distillations of the originals. Their personalities are built on the observations of Flow (see **Scene 2**) and other reploids the heroes have interacted with, and so aren't as deep or nuanced as the heroes, but the AI has calculated different likelihoods about each character's personality and thus may present the heroes' own secrets to embarrass or distract them. Those powers that rely on extraordinary sources are duplicated to the best of the Font's ability, but might use different descriptors, particularly for cosmic or magical effects.

Megastar uses his Argent upgrades to control the doppelgangers; this acts as a Mind Control 12 effect, helped by the fact that the doppelgangers are built already loyal to him. When it comes to questions of morality or motive, the copies are effectively Controlled by Megastar. The doppelgangers still share all the heroes' Complications, including psychological issues and motivations. The heroes can take advantage of these to gain an advantage over their copies, or even try to appeal to their duplicates' better natures. At least, until Megastar spends a Move action to re-assert control.

SHUTTING DOWN THE STELLAR FONT

The Stellar Font AI is a plot device and impervious to any physical attacks. It has Senses 7 (Vision Counters Concealment, Vision Counters Illusions) and Intellect 10. Stopping the threat it poses through its reploids, warships, and eventually its stellar engines requires either hacking the computer to shut it down, or persuading the intelligence to change willingly.

Hacking the Stellar Font

The heroes can shut down the Stellar Font by hacking into its control functions, but the process takes time and evokes the Font's greatest fears of abandonment. This is a challenge sequence.

Hacking the Stellar Font

Time: 1 round

Checks: DC 23 Technology or power check using an appropriate power like Interface.

Success: Beginning the AI's shutdown sequence requires a total of five Degrees of Success.

Consequences: Every failed check increases the DC of future checks by +1. After the first check—successful or not—the AI realizes what the heroes are trying to do and begins bringing additional defenses online, releasing one additional reploid assassin each round to join the fight.

Special: If the heroes have the Preserver override chip, they gain a +5 circumstance bonus to their Technology checks and failed checks do not increase the DC.

Swaying the Stellar Font

Rather than shutting down the Stellar Font, the heroes can try to calm its fears and generally persuade it to see them or the colonists of the Flegere system as its new family. This process is more difficult than hacking, given the Font's rage, but doesn't generate a hostile response. This is a challenge sequence.

Persuading ithe Stellar Font

Time: 1 round

Checks: DC 26 Expertise (Art, Music, Performance, or Philosophy), Persuasion, or a power check using an appropriate power. Heroes can also use Deception if they don't intend to remain with the Font or plan to destroy it after Megastar is defeated.

Success: A total of five Degrees of Success shifts the AI's attitude toward the heroes to neutral, but doesn't necessarily turn the computer against Megastar. Doing this either requires five additional Degrees of Success or for the heroes to trick Megastar into admitting he finds the AI annoying or plans to abandon it, a Deception check against Megastar's Insight that achieves 2 or more Degrees of Success.

Consequences: The Stellar Font doesn't have direct control over the doppelgangers, but it can stop providing Megastar with the Regeneration power if it turns against the Argent. Any attempt to hack the AI immediately removes all accumulated success to persuade it. If the heroes generate four Degrees of Failure before generating five Degrees of Success, the Stellar Font is reassured in its opinion that these strangers cannot be trusted and will no longer allow itself to be persuaded.

Complications

If the heroes manage to incapacitate Megastar without first shutting down the Stellar Font or winning its loyalty, the AI panics and tries to activate the next round of hero reploids it is manufacturing. This batch has not yet been differentiated, and pours forth from the vat as a single, massive creature that blends the features of all the heroes into a single, misshapen opponent standing 10 feet tall and wielding all of their combined powers at the best ranks and attack bonuses available. The mind of this reploid abomination is a jumble of the heroes' thoughts and simply lashes out in pain and fury against everyone nearby.

Megastar — PL 11

See the **Cast** section.

Combat — Initiative +2

Force Blast	+10	Ranged, Damage 12
Unarmed	+10	Close, Damage 12

Dodge	Parry	Fortitude	Will	Toughness
+10	+10	+13	+8	+12*

*Regeneration 10

Reploid Copies (Special) — PL 12

See the individuals' character sheets.

Combat — Initiative +0

Varies	+*	*

Dodge	Parry	Fortitude	Will	Toughness
varies*	varies*	varies*	varies*	varies*

*defenses and attacks based on replicated hero's stats

Reploid Abomination — PL 15

See the **Cast** section.

Combat — Initiative +2

Varies	+*	*

Dodge	Parry	Fortitude	Will	Toughness
10	10	15	15	20

*attack bonuses and effect ranks based on replicated heroes' stats

Wrap-Up

Once Megastar is defeated and the Stellar Font is either shut down or befriended, the heroes can stop the mass production currently underway. Without this enormous drain on its output, the system's sun begins shifting back to its normal, yellow hue. Any active reploids deactivate, melting back into harmless fluid.

The heroes can teleport back to the Severed Cyclops. Once out of the star's corona, they can either release Megastar to return to Tellax and the Argents empty-handed, or turn him over to local or galactic authorities. Sadly, the angry young man is not yet ready to start making amends for his mistakes and misdeeds.

Epilogue

The heroes must decide what to do about the Stellar Font. Preserver technology represents a huge asset for the Flegere system, but could also make it a target for aggressors like the Imperium, the Grue, and the Argents. If the AI is shut down, they can order the facility to self-destruct, deactivating the force field protecting it and letting the nuclear fire of the sun wash it away. A successful DC 25 Technology check can download the AI onto the Preserver override chip, should the heroes want to save the AI but destroy the installation. If they turn the facility over to the Planetary Tribunal, they can put the fleet of ships to work as a system defense, but what happens after that may depend on which leaders are left alive and their views toward the heroes.

If the heroes were wanted by local authorities for their initial confrontation with system fleets, the Tribunal drops all charges as the sun returns to normal.

Rewards

The heroes earn a power point for the adventure. If they handled the crisis with dignity and showed heroism representing Earth while exposing the Argent Alliance as the true threat to the Flegere System, award them one additional power point each.

Their adventure may leave the heroes with limited access to Preserver technology, specifically a cosmic 3D printer that can manufacture anything from minions to starships. Heroes might use the technology to redesign their equipment or devices, or trade in the Power points invested into their ship for a better (or at least different) model. They may likewise retain the Preserver AI if they thought to download it. The Font AI can operate other facilities and vehicles, such as a starship, but is lonely and inexperienced and wants companionship more than anything. Being immature, it may lead the heroes into further adventures as it tries to explore, modifies itself, or ignores orders and advice.

The Tribunal offers to let the heroes keep the Severed Cyclops as a reward for their work, offering the heroes a headquarters if they choose to remain in and around the Flegere system to study any other Preserver artifacts the system may hold.

Continuing the Adventure

There are several ways to extend this adventure into a longer adventure or story arc:

Rise of the Reploids

While the heroes defeated the Stellar Font, hundreds of the AI's reploids are still unaccounted for and may not shut down when their controller does. Without their master, the reploids lack purpose and begin defaulting to the worst impulses of the biological creatures they were based on. These copies begin to gather in Flegere's shadowy corners and in time a leader emerges. Can the heroes stop a secret society of shapeshifting nano machines?

The Imperium Invasion

As colonies of the now-conquered Lor Republic, it's only a matter of time before the Star Khan's attention turns towards the Flegere System, especially as rumors spread about its Preserver technology. The colonies suddenly have a fleet thanks to the heroes, but they lack champions to help coordinate their fledgling military against a full-scale invasion from a major power.

The Redeemer's Revenge

When news reaches Tellax about the Stellar Font's demise and Megastar's failure, the AI travels to the Flegere System with a squad of Argents to track down any remnants of Preserver technology and force the heroes to submit to his Argent conversion process. He believes those capable of defeating a Preserver AI must join his crusade against Collapsar, and if these subjects perish while resisting his transformation, then they can consider it punishment for meddling in his affairs.

Cast

The following are the various characters, both allies and adversaries, the heroes may encounter in *Prodigal Sun*.

Flegere Military Forces

The armed forces of the Flegere system are modest at best. The colony had little interest in maintaining more than a police force until the Republic fell. In the years since, they have purchased military surplus and built a few larger ships, creating a limited defensive force supplemented by a growing civilian training program. Use the **Alien Soldier** archetype (*Cosmic Handbook,* p. 133) for the default soldier or guard, should the heroes come into conflict with Flegere's defense force.

Flegere Planetary Leaders

Until recently, the four settled planets of the Flegere system worked well together thanks to their respective bounties, and the Tribunal rarely had to manage anything more than minor trade disputes. With tensions escalating thanks to reploid meddling, the planets are at each other's throats and their respective leaders are growing increasingly reactionary and critical of each other. Despite this, none of the leaders are especially malicious, even the suspicious Overseer Gallago, and they can be united with time and effort.

The major leaders of the system use the **Boss** minion archetype (*Deluxe Gamemaster's Guide*, p. 154). Apply the appropriate Alien Template (*Cosmic Handbook*, p. 134–136).

Flegere Space Fighter Pilots

Flegere pilots fly the system's small fleet of space fighters (*Deluxe Hero's Handbook*, p. 224) and are better trained than rank-and-file soldiers. While respectable combatants on their own, they are particularly capable behind the controls of a fighter.

Fighter Pilots — PL 5

Minions.

STR 0 **STA** 2 **AGL** 2 **DEX** 4 **FGT** 2 **INT** 1 **AWE** 1 **PRE** 0

Equipment: Blaster Pistol (Ranged Damage 5), Space Fighter, Space Suit (Feature 1 [Commlink]; Immunity 7 [Cold, Disease, Heat, Radiation, Suffocation, Vacuum])

Advantages: Equipment 15.

Skills: Athletics 4 (+4), Expertise: Pilot 4 (+5), Perception 4 (+5), Technology 2 (+3), Vehicles 6 (+10).

Offense: Init +2, Blaster Pistol +4 (Ranged, Damage 5), Unarmed +2 (Close, Damage 0).

Defense: Dodge 7, Parry 5, Fortitude 4, Toughness 2, Will 4.

Combat — **Initiative +2**

Blaster Pistol	+4	Ranged, Damage 5
Unarmed	+2	Close, Damage 0

Dodge	Parry	Fortitude	Will	Toughness
+7	+5	+4	+4	+2

Totals: Abilities 24 + Powers 0 + Advantages 15 + Skills 10 (20 ranks) + Defenses 13 = 62

A fighter pilot controlling a standard-issue fighter uses the following combat statistics instead to reflect the bonuses provided by their space fighter vehicle (see the *Deluxe Hero's Handbook*, pg. 224):

PILOTED FIGHTER	PL 7
Minions.	
Powers: Flight 14, **Blasters** Ranged Damage 10.	

COMBAT		INITIATIVE +2
Blasters	+4	Ranged, Damage 10

DODGE	PARRY	FORTITUDE	WILL	TOUGHNESS
+3	+1	+4	+11	+4

CAPITAL SHIPS

Capital ships are large vessels with crews numbering from a few dozen to hundreds. Because they are operated by large groups, capital ships are immune to Fortitude- and Will-based effects unless the area of effect is large enough to encompass the entire vessel; if an effect is large enough to target the entire crew at once, the capital ship resists the effect with a bonus equal to its PL (do not roll individually for each member of the crew). Capital ships can also attack more than once in a round as different crew members operate different weapon systems.

These statistics for capital ships don't follow the standard rules for vehicles, and treats them as a single opponent that can make multiple attacks in a single round.

HAASAAN CRUISERS	PL 10

COMBAT		INITIATIVE +4
Beam Weapons	+10	Ranged, Damage 10
Hull Dampener	+12	Ranged, Weaken Toughness 8

DODGE	PARRY	FORTITUDE	WILL	TOUGHNESS
+4	+0	—	—	+16

A Haasaan Cruiser may fire its Beam Weapon and Hull Dampener for a total of two attacks each round, due to its crew operating multiple weapon systems. The cruisers may only move once each round.

JEREID BATTLESHIP	PL 11

COMBAT		INITIATIVE +0
Blaster Cannons	+8	Ranged, Damage 12
Energy Torpedoes Homing	+10	Ranged, Burst Area Damage 12,

DODGE	PARRY	FORTITUDE	WILL	TOUGHNESS
+0	+0	—	—	+20

The Jereid Battleship may fire its Blaster Cannons twice and launch one Energy Torpedo each round, for a total of three attacks each round due to its crew operating multiple weapon systems. The battleship may only move once each round.

THE STELLAR FONT

The Stellar Font is a wounded child. It feels its abandonment by the Preservers eons ago as a personal rejection and doesn't understand how fear motivated their choices. With Megastar's arrival, it has begun to learn about the outside universe and those AIs the Preservers have allowed to roam free (to its understanding): Tellax and Collapsar. Bullied by the Argent without realizing it, the Font has begun developing its own cruel streak, and doesn't appreciate the frailty of mortal life.

The Font is currently acting out of fear and loneliness. It bonded to the first being to come along—Megastar—and is doing everything it can to make him happy. It doesn't understand much about the wider universe beyond a general excitement at meeting Tellax, the Preserver AI its creators *didn't* discard.

The Stellar Font is a PLX opponent (PLX1 if you are using the **Cosmic Level Benchmarks** described in the *Cosmic Handbook*), thanks mostly to the manufacturing facilities available to it. If downloaded onto a separate system, the AI uses the following statblock.

STELLAR FONT AI	PL 10

STR — **STA** — **AGL** — **DEX** –4 **FGT** –2 **INT** 10 **AWE** 3 **PRE** 3

Powers: Immunity to Fortitude Effects, **Translation Matrix** Comprehend 5 (Speak, Read, and Understand All Languages, Machines/Electronics).

Skills: Expertise: Engineering 10 (+20), Expertise: Medicine 5 (+15), Expertise: Science 8 (+18), Technology 8 (+18), Treatment 4 (+14).

Defense: Dodge —, Parry —, Fortitude Immune, Toughness 2, Will 8.

Totals: Abilities -10 + Powers 40 + Advantages 0 + Skills 18 (35 ranks) + Defenses 7 = 55

ALIEN WALKERS

Highly mobile battle frames, the walkers are some of the war machines being assembled by the Stellar Font. The units house din the Severed Cyclops are being used primarily for industrial assistance, offloading heavy goods to the teleport platform.

ALIEN WALKERS	PL 10
Minions.	

STR 12 **STA** 12 **AGL** 2 **DEX** 0 **FGT** 8 **INT** 0 **AWE** 0 **PRE** 0

Powers: Armored (Protection 2, Impervious 14), **Blaster** (Ranged Damage 10), **Sealed** (Immunity 10 (life support)), **Tall** (Growth 12, Permanent, Innate).

Skills: Perception 4 (+4), Ranged Combat: Blaster 10 (+10).

COMBAT		INITIATIVE +2
Blaster	+10	Ranged, Damage 10
Unarmed	+8	Close, Damage 12

DODGE	PARRY	FORTITUDE	WILL	TOUGHNESS
+6	+6	+12	+6	+14

Totals: Abilities 20 + Powers 71 + Advantages 0 + Skills 7 + Defenses 20 = 118.

Complications: Motivation—Loyalty. Weakness: Vulnerable to Trip Attacks.

Reploid Assassins

Most of the Stellar Font's reploid infiltrators share a common template, with only their individual memories and appearances differentiating them regardless of their apparent species, age, or profession. Made from the mental templates of real individuals, they know their original's secrets and preferences, making them perfect infiltrators. In combat, they rely on their Power Attack to overcome tough foes.

The Reploid Assassins uses the **Assassin** villain archetype (*Deluxe Gamemaster's Guide*, p. 78) with alternative equipment, a reduced Will defense, and immunity to critical hits, and a partial immunity to mental effects, making them PL 9 opponents.

Reploid Assassins — PL 9

Minions.

STR 3 **STA** 3 **AGL** 4 **DEX** 4 **FGT** 8 **INT** 1 **AWE** 2 **PRE** 3

Powers: Reploid Immunity 2 (Critical Hits), Immunity 20 (Mental Effects; Limited to Half Effect).

Equipment: Blaster Pistol.

Advantages: Accurate Attack, Assessment, Benefit, Alternate Identity: Choose Identity, Contacts, Defensive Attack, Defensive Roll 2, Equipment 2, Evasion 2, Improved Aim, Improved Critical: Blaster Pistol, Improved Grab, Improved Initiative 2, Power Attack, Precise Attack (All) 4, Ranged Attack 4, Takedown, Throwing Mastery 4, Ultimate Effort: Aim, Uncanny Dodge.

Skills: Acrobatics 8 (+12), Athletics 8 (+11), Close Combat: Blades 4 (+12), Deception 9 (+12), Expertise: Assassin 8 (+9), Expertise: Streetwise 8 (+9), Expertise: Tactics 6 (+7), Insight 8 (+10), Intimidation 6 (+9), Perception 8 (+10), Ranged Combat: Guns 7 (+11), Sleight of Hand 8 (+12), Stealth 9 (+13), Technology 8 (+9), Treatment 2 (+3), Vehicles 5 (+9).

Combat — **Initiative +12**

Blaster Pistol	+15	Ranged, Damage 5 (Crit 19–20)
Unarmed	+12	Close, Damage 5

Dodge	Parry	Fortitude	Will	Toughness
+13	+13	+9	+9	+5/3*

*without Defensive Roll

Totals: Abilities 56 + Powers 12 + Advantages 32 + Skills 56 (112 ranks) + Defenses 27 = 183

Replod Auroch

The reploid version of Blackstar's enforcer, Auroch, was created from Blackstar's memories and limited understanding of the powerful alien warrior. The copy is a simpleminded combatant, creating enormous weapons using his Shadow Control to battle foes in melee.

The Stellar Font can't reproduce the powers of the Shadow Bands itself, so it broadcasts powers directly from the captive Blackstar's weapons.

Reploid Auroch — PL 12

STR 7 **STA** 5 **AGL** 1 **DEX** 2 **FGT** 8 **INT** 0 **AWE** 1 **PRE** 2

Powers: Reploid Immunity 2 (Critical Hits), Immunity 20 (Mental Powers; Limited to Half Effect), Regeneration 5; **Dark Flight** Flight 10 (2,000 MPH; AE: Movement 3 [Space Travel 3]); **Shadow Control** Array (Blinding (Ranged Cumulative Affliction 10 [Resisted by Dodge, overcome by Damage or Sleight of Hand; Impaired, Disabled, Unaware; Limited to Vision])), **Dark Blast** (Ranged Damage 10), **Darkness** (Ranged Cloud Area Concealment Attack 4 [All Visual Senses]), **Shadow Constructs** (Create 10), **Shadow Weapons** (Strength-Based Damage 6 [Penetrating, Reach 4, Split]); **Shadow Shield**, Immunity 10 (Life Support), Protection 10 (Impervious); **Shadow Sight** Senses 2 (Darkvision).

Advantages: All-out Attack, Move-by Action, Power Attack, Set-up, Startle.

Skills: Athletics 4 (+11), Close Combat: Shadow Weapons 3 (+11), Insight 5 (+6), Intimidation 8 (+10), Perception 4 (+5), Ranged Combat: Shadow Control 9 (+11), Stealth 4 (+5).

Combat — **Initiative +1**

Blinding	+10	Ranged, Affliction 10
Dark Blast	+10	Ranged, Damage 10
Shadow Weapons	+11	Close, Damage 13
Unarmed	+8	Close, Damage 7

Dodge	Parry	Fortitude	Will	Toughness
+8	+8	+13	+10	+15/5*

*without Shadow Shield

Totals: Abilities 52 + Powers 83 + Advantages 5 + Skills 19 (37 ranks) + Defenses 24 = 183

Replod Abomination

Still composed largely of undifferentiated nanites who haven't had time to "set" in their final forms, the reploid clones of the heroes are extremely unstable if their controlling AI is taken offline or upset (such as by Megastar's defeat), the unstable copies merge into a single colossal form that combines the features and powers of the heroes present. The abomination has the highest rank for each Ability, Skill, and Power from the assembled heroes

The abomination shares memory imprints from all the heroes, making its behavior erratic. It likely can't survive the Stellar Font's destruction... or can it?

Reploid Abomination — PL 15

STR 0 **STA** 0 **AGL** 0 **DEX** 0 **FGT** 0 **INT** 0 **AWE** 0 **PRE** 0

Powers: Mimic Variable 20 (Move action, Continuous), **Sense Powers** Senses 4 (Acute Analytical Ranged Detect Powers).

Advantages: Assessment..

Combat — **Initiative +2**

Varies	+*	*

Dodge	Parry	Fortitude	Will	Toughness
10	10	15	15	20

*attack bonuses and effect ranks based on replicated heroes' stats

Totals: Abilities 0 + Powers 184 + Advantages 1 + Skills 0 (0 ranks) + Defenses 40 = 225.

The Blackstar Reploid

The reploid copy of Blackstar uses the same statblock as the original, but like the Auroch reploid its powers are broadcast from Blackstar's Shadow Bands. This broadcast process lessens the copy's powers, reducing the rank of his Blinding, Dark Blast, Shadow Constructs, and Shadow Shield powers by 2.

This version of Blackstar also gains the Reploid suite of powers possessed by Auroch:

Reploid Immunity 2 (Critical Hits), Immunity 20 (Mental Powers; Limited to Half Effect), Regeneration 5

THE BLACKGUARD

A cosmic legion empowered by darkness and dedicated to destroying the Star Knights and replacing them as shepherds of the galaxy, the Blackguard are tyrants and killers with grand plans. Channeling cosmic might through their Shadow Bands—strange artifacts empowered by a Preserver artifact called the Nightstone—they can cross the galaxy without the need for ships, unleash powerful bolts of energy, and give their will physical form.

BLACKSTAR

A former Star Knight, Rojan Lhar was exiled from the order when it was discovered he used the power granted by the Star Stone to conquer and "benevolently" uplift a world he dubbed too primitive on its own. Stripped of his powers and imprisoned on a remote asteroid, Blackstar returned after pledging loyalty to the extradimensional tyrant Omega, who granted him the first pair of Shadow Bands. His own bands eventually lead Lhar to the source of their power: the mysterious Nightstone, from which he has since created dozens of Shadow Bands—none as powerful as his own—to equip an army of like-minded despots.

Blackstar is a conqueror and control freak at heart, convinced the entire universe is as tempted by cruelty as he and so only his strong hand can guide it. He preferred a time when the cosmos adored him as a hero, but if he cannot be loved then being feared is nearly as good.

More information on Blackstar can be found on page 103 of the *Cosmic Handbook*.

MEGASTAR

Christopher Beck always loved the idea of being a hero more than he loved the responsibility that comes with power. When he discovered a crashed alien spaceship and accidentally bonded with the Preserver technology inside, he got to live out his dream of being a hero when he joined the Claremont Academy and the first generation of Next-Gen. But unlike his classmates, Chris didn't really mature. Power came easy to him, and the more he tried to prove that everyone should respect him, the more self-centered and myopic he became. After graduation, he failed to join the Freedom League, and without any other plans for his future he began drifting across the world.

When Megastar later encountered the Preserver robot Tellax, he finally realized where his powers came from, and the AI offered him the purpose and respect the troubled young man had always craved as an authoritarian Argent, bringing a chaotic universe to heel under Tellax's leadership.

Megastar has thoroughly bought into his own propaganda and believes Tellax's brand of order can save the universe from plunging into chaos. A lot of his passion stems from youthful anger and the belief he has never been given the appreciation he has always been due. His time among the Argents is not helping to temper these worst impulses, and Chris is developing into a dangerous bully backed up by an army of cosmically-empowered agents.

Megastar has uncharacteristically kept his head down since arriving in the Flegere system—a task made easier by the Stellar Font's ability to create whatever he needs. He works through reploid agents spread across the system while trying to keep the Font's impatient AI from ruining his long-term plans.

More information on Megastar can be found on page 103 of *Rogue's Gallery*.

BLACKSTAR PL14

STR	STA	AGL	DEX	FGT	INT	AWE	PRE
1	2	2	3	8	1	3	3

POWERS

Darkflight: Flight 11 (4,000 MPH), Movement 3 (Space Travel 3) • *28 points*

Shadow Control: Array (33 points; all Dynamic)

- **Blinding** Ranged Cumulative Affliction 16 (Resisted by Dodge, Overcome by Will; Impaired, Disabled, Unaware), Limited to Vision • *33 points*
- **Dark Blast** Ranged Damage 16 • *1 point*
- **Darkness** Cloud Area 5 (250 feet) Concealment Attack 4 (Visual) • *1 point*
- **Shadow Constructs** Create Shadow Constructs 16 • *1 point*

Shadow Shield Immunity 10 (Life Support), Impervious Protection 16 • *42 points*

Shadow Sight (Senses 2 (Darkvision)) • *2 points*

SKILLS

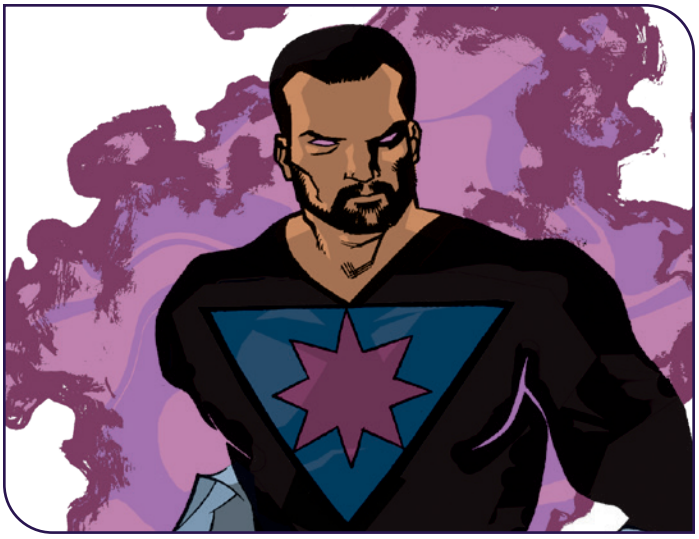
Acrobatics 6 (+8), Athletics 4 (+5), Deception 8 (+11), Insight 6 (+9), Intimidation 6 (+9), Perception 4 (+7), Persuasion 4 (+7), Ranged Combat: Shadow Control 3 (+6), Stealth 4 (+6), Vehicles 4 (+7)

ADVANTAGES

Accurate Attack, All-out Attack, Benefit 4 (Leader of the Blackguard), Fearless, Power Attack, Precise Attack (Ranged; Cover), Ranged Attack 6, Startle

OFFENSE

	INITIATIVE +2
Blinding +12	Ranged, Affliction 16, Resisted by Will
Dark Blast +12	Ranged, Damage 16
Darkness —	Cloud Area, Concealment
Unarmed +8	Close, Damage 1



DEFENSE

DODGE	10	**FORTITUDE**	12
PARRY	10	**TOUGHNESS**	18/2*
WILL	16	*without Shadow Shield	

POWER POINTS

ABILITIES	46	**SKILLS**	25
POWERS	111	**DEFENSES**	33
ADVANTAGES	16	**TOTAL**	231

COMPLICATIONS

Dark Ambition: Bolstered by the Shadow Bands and the Nightstone, Blackstar wants nothing less than dominion over the stars so he can impose his own vision of order.

Dark Fury: Normally cold and controlled, Blackstar becomes furious when reminded of his betrayal of the Star Knights, since it is they who have betrayed him and their mission to bring order to the galaxy!

NOTES

DAMAGE _____

DAZED? ☐
One standard action each round

STAGGERED? ☐
One standard action, –1 movement

INCAPACITATED? ☐
Defenseless, Stunned, Unaware

MEGASTAR PL11

STR	STA	AGL	DEX	FGT	INT	AWE	PRE
12/2	9/2	2	2	10	0	1	1

POWERS

Force Blast: Ranged Damage 12 • *24 points*

Nanomorph: Machine Forms (Variable 4), Machine Shapes (Morph 2) • *38 points*

Physical Enhancement: Enhanced Stamina 7, Enhanced Strength 10, Power-lifting (Enhanced Strength 3, Limited to Lifting) • *37 points*

Protective Shell: Immunity 10 (Life Support), Impervious Toughness 10, Protection 3 • *23 points*

Sensor Systems: Senses 6 (Communication Link with Tellax, Direction Sense, Distance Sense, Low-light Vision, Radio, Rapid Radio) • *6 points*

Stellar Flight: Flight 12 (8,000 MPH), Movement 3 (Space Flight 3) • *30 points*

SKILLS

Deception 8 (+9), Insight 4 (+5), Intimidation 4 (+5), Perception 8 (+9), Ranged Combat: Force Blast 4 (+10), Technology 8 (+8)

ADVANTAGES

Benefit 3 (MEGAS wielder), Fearless, Holding Back 2*, Interpose, Ranged Attack 4, Taunt

*See the *Hero High* sourcebook for details.

OFFENSE

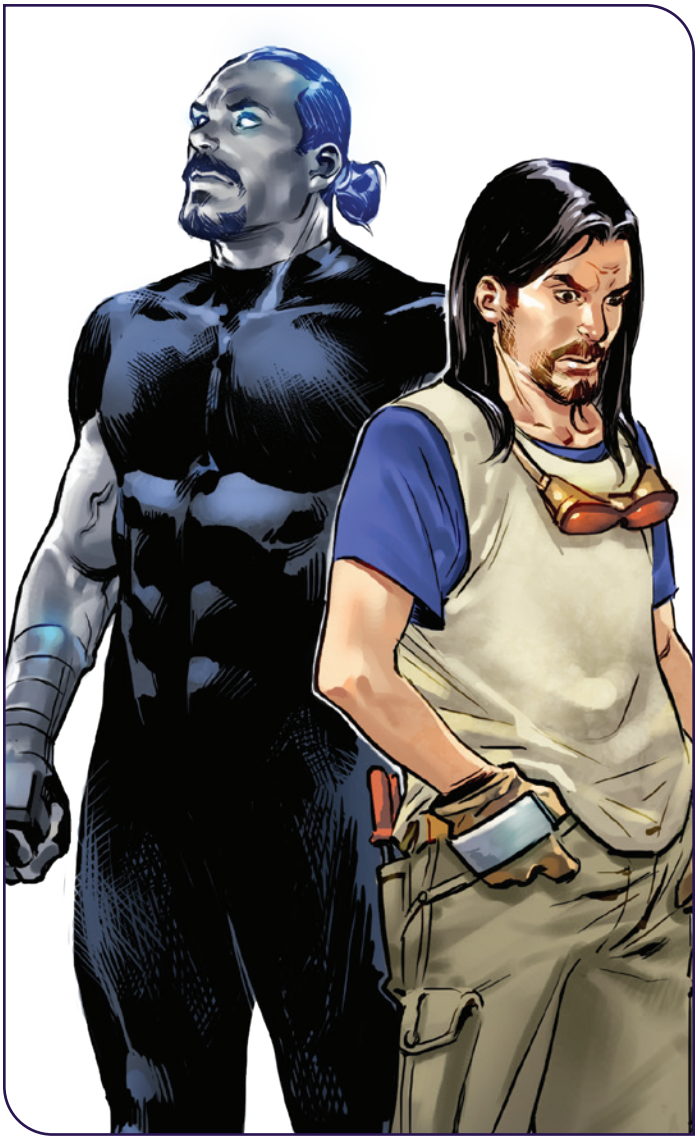
	INITIATIVE +2
Force Blast +10	Ranged, Damage 12
Unarmed +10	Close, Damage 12

DEFENSE

DODGE	10	**FORTITUDE**	13
PARRY	10	**TOUGHNESS**	12/2*
WILL	8	*without powers	

POWER POINTS

ABILITIES	40	**SKILLS**	18
POWERS	162	**DEFENSES**	19
ADVANTAGES	12	**TOTAL**	251



COMPLICATIONS

Motivation—Recognition: Megastar is torn between fulfilling the mission of the Argents and bringing order to the cosmos, and realizing that the kind of order Tellax would create is just a new kind of empire.

Uncertain Temper: Deep down, Megastar is lost and uncertain, which sometimes leads him to lash out when he's forced to confront the unresolved issues in his life.

NOTES

DAMAGE

DAZED? ☐
One standard action each round

STAGGERED? ☐
One standard action, –1 movement

INCAPACITATED? ☐
Defenseless, Stunned, Unaware

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